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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, July 3, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, Bureau of Plant Industry and Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

The first letter to come up for consideration today is from Wisconsin. I judge from this letter that tea-kettles in Wisconsin have the same trouble that tea-kettles in New York State often have. Perhaps you'll remember awhile back when a friend in New York asked how to remove a dark scale or deposit that had collected on the bottom and sides of her tea-kettle. Well, now here's a Wisconsin lady asking the same thing. I'm sure housekeepers living in other states where the water is hard will all sympathize. For the chemists tell me that the mineral salts-- chiefly lime and magnesium, in hard water are responsible for this deposit. When the water boils, these mineral salts"precipitate," as the chemists say, and form this curious layer over the inside of the kettle. Sometimes it grows nearly a quarter of an inch thick. Of course, it wastes fuel and makes the kettle loss efficient, for the heat has difficulty in penetrating such a crust.

The best way to prevent this scale from forming is to look after your tea-kettle as you would any other utensil -- wash and scour it every week, if necessary.

Now, if the deposit has already formed, you have your choice of one of two methods of removing it. The first way is to remove it with acid. Heat some vinegar and water in the kettle. If the solution bubbles as it heats, you'll know that the mineral deposit is gradually softening and that you'll soon be able to scrape it out. But sometimes acid has no effect on the deposit. Then try the dry-heat method. Set the dry kettle over the flame long enough to heat the metal. Then pour in a little cold water. Be careful not to scald yourself with the steam when you pour in the water. This dry heating and sudden cooling often will cause the scale to crack so that you can easily remove it. Of course, you have to do this heating with care. Never let the kettle get too hot, or if it does, you may warp the kettle when you pour in the cold water.

Well, as that wise old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The best way is not to let the scale form.

Now here's a letter about a silk dress -- a nice crisp silk dress, it was, when it was new. But after one or two tubbings it became limp and lost its luster. What to do about that wilted dress? The clothing specialists tell me that sometimes a tablespoon of white vinegar added to each gallon of the final rinse water will return the crisp texture to silk. Or, you can give the dress a final rinse in water containing some gum arabic. Dissolve a tablespoon of gum arabic in a cup of cold water. Cook it for five minutes. Then add this

concentrated solution to the rinse water. You can try out the amount you need on a little sample piece of the silk.

Sometimes the way you wash a silk dress does the damage. The best rule to follow is the lukewarm rule -- lukewarm suds, lukewarm rinsing water, medium-warm iron. Heat is hard on silk. So is sunshine. So is rough handling. Remember to be gentle with all silks. Never wring, pull, rub or twist them. In the suds, squeeze out the dirt. In the rinsing water, squeeze out the soap. Then, squeeze out the rinsing water. Hang the dress carefully until partially dry, then roll it in towels until ready to iron. By the way, cool water often saves color that has a tendency to run. So does rapid work -- quick washing and quick drying. Quick drying is especially important because much of the running occurs after the fabric comes out of the water.

Now I'd like to clear up a point that we mentioned in one of last week's answers. Do you remember that last week we discussed putting up fruit juices? Well, one listener tells me that I didn't make my answer quite clear to her. She wants to know whether you boil or just heat the fruit before you press out the juice. The answer is: Sometimes you boil the fruit and sometimes you just heat it, depending on the use you are going to make of it. If you are going to make jelly later from the bottled juice, you need to boil the fruit to extract the pectin along with the juice. Low heat won't bring out enough pectin. But, if you are going to use the juice simply as juice, not jelly, why then, you'll just heat the fruit enough to make the juice flow easily -- never boil it, because boiling changes the flavor. When you have pressed the juice from the fruit, you simmer that juice ten minutes in a kettle. Then you pour it in sterilized jars and set the jars in a water bath. Cook the jars for five minutes with the water at simmering temperature. There. Does that make the process clear? Low heat from first to last for juice. As we've said before, low heat is all you need for sterilizing a liquid like this which contains acid.

Well, now here's a question about another method of preservation -- drying. "Last year I dried my blackberries and red raspberries very successfully. Will you tell me about drying strawberries and cherries?"

The specialists say that rapsberries, blackberries and cherries dry well, but that strawberries are too delicate in structure and contain too much juice. When you dry the water from strawberries, you have almost nothing left. Our grandmothers often dried their apples and peaches as well as their berries. Of course, they hadn't yet learned the secret of canning. Apples and peaches also dry well, but they discolor in the process unless you treat them with sulphur as commercial products are treated. Though drying is one of the oldest methods of food preservation, the specialists advise it only under special conditions. Wherever possible, they prefer canning or storing food. But if you lack canning equipment or want a very cheap way of keeping food for winter, drying is a good method of preserving beans, peas, corn and berries, especially if you live in a dry, sunny climate where the weather will aid you in the job. If you can't depend on the weather, you can use a warm-air dryer over your kitchen stove. A homemade dryer of this sort is simply a series of wire-mesh racks that let the warm air reach the fruits or vegetables spread out on them.

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